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## 50,000 Appeals Later: Idaho's Appellate Courts Mark a Milestone

The first opinion the Idaho Supreme Court issued after statehood came in 1891. *Goodnight v. Moody* addressed how much money state lawmakers were owed to cover their travel and living expenses during the very first legislative session that year.

Two years later, the Idaho Supreme Court began to number its cases with *City of Lewiston v. Booth*, an appeal establishing a ditch owner's requirement to repay the city after it repaired a bridge over the ditch.

Today, Idaho's appellate courts continue their vital role in preserving Idahoans' rights and explaining how this state's laws affect our lives. *Whittaker v. IDWR*, an appeal involving a proposed water-rights transfer, recently became the 50,000<sup>th</sup> numbered appeal filed with the Idaho Supreme Court and the Idaho Court of Appeals. The case has not yet reached the briefing stage and will be heard at some point in the months to come.

Idaho's unified court system has two levels. The trial courts, housed in county courthouses across this state, are where almost all court cases begin and are heard. Above them are the appellate courts, whose primary focus is on reviewing lower-court decisions and clarifying the law.

The Idaho Supreme Court is known as this state's court of last resort, meaning it's the last court that can decide if an Idaho case was handled correctly. Created in 1980, the Idaho Court of Appeals hears cases assigned to it by the Supreme Court and helps manage the roughly 1,000 appeals filed up from the trial courts each year.

Both courts, as with all courts in this state, base their decisions on the rule of law. The state Legislature writes the laws; the courts then apply them equally regardless of judges' own opinions. But the Idaho Supreme Court's interpretations have special weight as they set precedent for all Idaho state courts to follow.

"Sitting in the Supreme Court courtroom, we feel the presence of those justices and judges who came before us. We now humbly carry on their work," said Chief Justice G. Richard Bevan. "To look back across the decades is to truly understand how our courts helped make Idaho unique."

To learn more about the work of Idaho's appellate courts, visit [isc.idaho.gov](http://isc.idaho.gov).

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